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The Musical World.

LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 1890.

FACTS AND COMMENTS.

The cardinal principle of the "Scots Observer's" artistic creed is, it is understood by those who read it, that art is not only absolutely distinct and unconnected with ethics, but also that it has nothing whatever to do with the emotional and intellectual life. "Subject" is only an opportunity for intelligent treatment—that is the pleasing doctrine which the youths of Edinburgh put forward with such admirable zeal. At any rate, the "Scots Observer" is consistent, for its last issue contains a violent attack upon Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, based upon the fact that the author of "The Middleman" and "Judah" is consciously labouring to bring the drama into touch with life—that, in a word, he seeks to write plays which are not only artistic but are capable of touching the hearer's spirit to finer issues than those to which it might be touched by, say, an Adelphi melodrama or Mr. Henley's essays on art. This, in the eyes of the "Scots Observer," is a deadly and unpardonable sin, and, of course, when once you have got to the right standpoint of dramatic criticism you see that a man who writes a play which stimulates the ethical consciousness of the spectator cannot be otherwise than a bad artist and a pestilent fellow. But you have got to get there first. Meanwhile, you may perhaps be foolish enough to think that, to put things on the very lowest ground, it is unwise to discourage any attempts to produce good work, even if they are not entirely successful. The two plays by virtue of

which Mr. Jones holds his present position to-day certainly deal with ethical problems; and were this their only virtue the attack made upon them by the sages of Thistle-street, Edinburgh—a truly appropriate locality—might have some force. But they are a great deal more. Dramatic interest, literary style, are there—they have art. And Mr. Jones most certainly has a very individual vein of humour. That the "Scots Observer" has not is clearly proved by the fact that the story which Mr. Jones tells of himself is taken by his critic quite *au sérieux*. "A business manager"—this is the familiar story—"once printed his name on the bill in a larger type than usual. He was promptly and vigorously reproved by a jealous actor. 'Put the name in the same letters as the last author,' was the managerial answer. The last author had been Sheridan, and Mr. Jones, in a moment of inspired modesty murmured, 'That will be quite large enough for me!'" This—which was perhaps a mild joke, but still a joke—is, says the "Scots Observer," almost tragic. What of the almost tragic dulness thus displayed by the critic? And we fear very much that the public which has found in "Judah" so much to quicken their imagination and to stir their sympathy will not be disposed to forego these pleasures at the bidding of the "Scots Observer." To crush so earnest and able a dramatist as is Mr. Henry Arthur Jones one would need the sanity and sincerity of a Macaulay as well as his virulence. But the dwellers in Thistle-street possess voices of singularly limited range. Perhaps diet has something to do with it.

The pessimist, who is always with us, is already at work and prophesying dreadful things. He has been turning his attention lately to Music in Society, and has decided to foretell thus early the horrors that await us next season. The banjo, says he, is dead, and the Jew's-harp; and the mysterious powers who hold our fortunes in the hollow of their hands ordain that the fashionable instrument of the near future will be the flute. It is in vain to fling appealing hands to heaven, beseeching for mercy; the fiat has gone forth, irrevocable. Equally useless is it to ask what national sin has deserved such punishment; it is probable that the just gods have determined to scourge the vanity of those of us who, misled by the fashionable enthusiasm for the banjo, vaunted of late that we were, after all, a musical people. But surely the punishment is excessive. Does the reader fully perceive its vastness? The flute, handled by, let us say, a Radcliff, is a beautiful and expressive instrument. *Corruptio optimi pessima*—its degradation is all the more painful. When the amateur operates upon it it gives forth feeble whistles or unexpected octaves, or—this is its least malicious proceeding—the notes fail altogether. Then the amateur says that the light is bad, or the piano is out of tune, and may he begin again? He does begin again—but he never ends. He is the embodiment in flesh of *Da Capo*. But what will it be if ladies should undertake the dreadful office? What man is there of us who would willingly see even his mother-in-law distending her cheeks until her eyes start from their spheres in the wild efforts to produce melodious sounds from the obstinate reed? Minerva, say the ancient poets, once tried to play the flute; but, catching sight of herself in the stream, she was so horrified at the distortion of her face that she flung the vile instrument away. Cynics may here discover indications of the natural antipathy between wisdom and the flute, and for the moment we are cynics. Quite certain is it that the day on which flute-playing becomes fashionable in London will mark the disintegration of London society.

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No—we withdraw the suggestion which we kindly offered a few weeks since, that our contemporary, the "Musical Standard," should call itself the "Drapeau de l'Avenir." We fear that, like "The Times," the rigid conservatism with which it clings to the news of yester-year—*les neiges d'antan*—fits it rather for the perusal of those whose eyes, as Rossetti has it, are "set backwards" in their heads. For instance, in its last issue (Aug. 16) our contemporary gives, under the head-line "Music in London," a notice of the concert given by Madame Martinez on July 30 (1) but omits all mention of the Promenade Concerts. Moreover, although the official organ of the College of Organists, it gave no notice of the recent distribution of diplomas by Mr. Sidebotham until the week following that in which the ceremony was noticed in our columns.

* * *

And yet—and yet—the "Musical Standard" in its last issue publishes a piece of news which is startling indeed. Not the most energetic of our colleagues on the London press had the least notion of it—and we confess our utter inability to imagine how the "Standard" has managed to obtain so interesting an item of information so much in advance of all the rest of us. "Mr. Arthur Friedheim"—this is the astounding news—"will play at the Beethoven and Emperor Concerts." Which of us had heard of these new concerts? And where are they going to be given? We may hazard the guess that the latter have been organised in honour of the visit paid by the young German Emperor; but we give it up, as far as the "Beethoven" concerts are concerned. Certainly the "Musical Standard" scores this time!

* * *

Since writing the above a possible explanation has occurred to us. Can it be that our contemporary meant to indicate that Mr. Friedheim would play Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto?

* * *

We remarked last week upon the difference of opinion shown between certain critics as to a recent performance at the Promenade Concerts, but were careful to indicate that the inaccuracy of the "Standard's" criticism was not to be laid at the door of the able musician who is the recognised critic on that journal. That he is still holiday-making is made obvious by the notice which appeared in the "Standard's" columns of the first of the Classical Nights at Covent Garden, which, says the writer, "appear to enjoy a somewhat doubtful popularity." He goes on to imply that their popularity is waning, further adding that "it is a significant fact that the rows of chairs which used to be provided for auditors in the body of the theatre have disappeared." What manner of memory is possessed by this writer we do not know; but it is certainly a good many years since Mr. Freeman Thomas *did* provide his patrons with chairs. That is, however, a comparatively small matter. The real pity is that anyone should, explicitly or implicitly, try to discourage efforts to improve public taste by ascertaining their hopelessness. That taste is in so deplorable a condition that the smallest effort, sincerely made, should be welcomed, and not discouraged by veiled hints of its uselessness.

* * *

Music by the Sea is one of the texts dear to the journalist's heart, for it serves to unseal a very perennial stream of eloquence at a time when he finds it difficult to make "copy" at all. But in attacking the execrable music which makes the life of the visitor to Brighton a burden to him, the "Daily Telegraph" has done real service. We ourselves have spoken of the matter, and we are glad that others are helping to draw public attention to the point. It

is certainly a disgrace that the most famous and popular watering-place in the United Kingdom should be content with the cacophonies of the vilest of German or other itinerant musicians, while a Continental town of one-tenth the importance of Brighton would have a permanent and efficient orchestra. It is perhaps too much to ask at present that every municipality in England should have its band; but the advantages to be derived by Brighton from the provision of better music are so obvious that the authorities can hardly hope to escape from the charge of blindness or indifference to their own interests if they allow the streets of their beautiful town to be made intolerable to all those who can distinguish between music and noise. And £300 a year will not mend matters.

* * *

From which we are led to think of the more distant Brighton Beach where Mr. Anton Seidl is making such gallant efforts to provide the jaded New Yorker with seaside music really worthy of the name. We spoke last week of the admirable concerts which are given twice daily by his splendid band. But it seems that there is a reverse side to the picture, for it is alleged that the seaside public will have none of the good things thus provided. When it goes to the seaside it wants to be amused and not instructed. Did Mr. Seidl offer nothing but Wagner, Bach, or Beethoven, one could understand the public's reluctance, for, after all, there is a golden mean; but this is not so. Here, for instance, is the programme of a recent Sunday concert:—

Waltz, "Blue Danube," J. Strauss; Hungarian Rhapsodie (III.), Liszt; Largo, Handel; (Violin solo: Mr. Clifford Schmidt); Overture, "Tannhäuser," Wagner; (a) Serenade, Haydn, (b) Menuetto, Boccherini, for string orchestra; Ballet music, "Cid," Massenet; (a) Castillane, (b) Aragonese, (c) Madrilene, (d) Navarraise; Entr'acte Gavotte (for string orchestra), Gillet; Little Serenade, Grünfeld; (a) Marionet, waltz, Delibes; (b) Toreador and Andalouse, Rubinstein; Waltz, "King-Songs," J. Strauss.

Surely this is a programme which might be enjoyed alike by the most eclectic and the most Philistine hearers. Yet it appears Mr. Seidl charms in vain. By the way, it will be noted that Mr. Seidl charms twice on Sunday, from which it would appear that American puritanism is evaporating.

* * *

A correspondent of an American contemporary recently inquired of its editor how many musicians besides Ambrose Thomas had set the play of "Hamlet." The editor, in reply, gave the following list, which our readers may be interested to see in its entirety:—

"Hamlet," by Gasparini (libretto by Zen and Pariani), brought out at the San Cassiano Theatre, Venice, on December 26, 1705. "Hamlet," by Scarlatti, brought out at the Caprinica Theatre, Rome, 1715. "Hamlet," by Carcano (libretto by Zen and Pariani), brought out at the Sant' Angelo Theatre, Venice, carnival, 1742. "Hamlet," by Stadtfeld, Darmstadt, 1757. "Hamlet," by Caruso, De la Pergola Theatre, Florence, in 1790. "Hamlet," overture and incidental music by the Abbé Vogler, published at Speyer in 1791. "Hamlet," by Mercadante (libretto by Felice Romani), Scala Theatre, Milan, December 26, 1822. "Hamlet," by Buzzola (libretto by Peruzzini), Fenice Theatre, Venice, February 24, 1848. "Hamlet," by Zanadini (words and music), San Benedetto Theatre, Venice, May 30, 1854. "Hamlet," by Moroni (libretto by Peruzzini), Apollo Theatre, Rome, June 2, 1860. "Hamlet," by Franco Faccio (libretto by Arrigo Boito), Carlo Felice Theatre, Genoa, May 30, 1865. To these might be added the "Hamlet," by Aristides Hignard, published for some time but never yet performed, and the "Hamlet" (overture, entr'acts and melodramas) by Victorin Joncières, performed at Paris and Nantes in 1867 for the "Hamlet" translation by Alexander Dumas.

* * *

We have received the report of the speeches made by Dr. Mackenzie and Mr. Thomas Threlfall at the distribution of prizes by Lady Randolph Churchill to the successful students of the

Royal Academy. It is rather late in the day to refer to that interesting ceremony, and we shall content ourselves with quoting a single sentence of the Principal's admirable speech, commending it to the further recollection of those to whom it was addressed:

"It has frequently come under my personal observation that students who have shown aptitude in one particular branch—let me say harmony, for instance—and who have gained perhaps all the possible distinctions which a school afforded, have utterly failed not only to proceed further in that all-important branch, but have actually lost a great deal of knowledge acquired long before leaving school. This is not acting fairly by the Institution, by the professors, or by themselves, and makes any certificate of merit valueless, nay, even misleading. I trust that there are none such present to whom these remarks may be applicable. Let me ask you to consider that your responsibility towards the Academy is even more serious when you have ceased to be students, because you go from us as examples of our training. You, in fact, are representatives of the Institution, and we look to you to help us worthily. On the other hand, you may be sure—and you will believe me when I say it—that we shall rejoice with you in any fortune that may fall to your share; we shall feel honoured in your triumphs and proud of your successes."

Apparently there is need of a censor of opera in Italy. Writing in *"l'Opinione,"* one of the best known journalists alleges that in Naples particularly, and generally in the southern provinces, operettas of the most obscene character are given. The works of Suppé or Lecocq, in themselves—as left by their authors—harmless, serve only as pretexts for disgraceful immoralities, and have, indeed, been so altered by their Italian adapters, who lose no opportunity of inserting their own vulgarities, that they are quite unrecognisable. The writer suggests strongly that there are many such theatres which should be instantly closed by the Government. All of which is very unpleasant reading for those who desire to see an art which can be pure without censorship.

The first of the musical competitions which are due to the generosity of Anton Rubinstein will take place on the 27th inst. at St. Petersburg. The prizes, in total value £200, are open to composers and pianists, of whom the former must send in a work for pianoforte and orchestra, or a piece of chamber-music with pianoforte part, while the latter will be called upon to play a concerto, or other pieces to be chosen. The competitions will take place every five years, and will be held in rotation at St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, and Paris. And why not at London? We have still got one or two composers and pianists left.

M. Saint-Saëns is an ingenious and many-sided man. Having aroused public curiosity by his recent disappearance just as his new opera was being produced, he has now determined to appear in another capacity than that of musician. He is secluding himself in Saint Germain, where he is at work, not on an opera, but on a volume of poems.

It is understood that Madame Voenna, one of the best known of Viennese operatic artists, will be a "star" of the short season of opera which Mr. Lago intends to give at Covent Garden this autumn. Mr. Lago proposes, we believe, that Madame Voenna shall appear in Gluck's *"Armida,"* while the parts of Orfeo and Euridice in *"Orfeo,"* which will also be given, are to be undertaken by Julia and Sofia Ravogli. The arrangements are far from complete, but such unfashionable but musical people as may be in town during the autumn will probably have the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with *"Mefistofele,"* *"Anna Bolena,"* and

the *"Matrimonio Segretto,"* while hopes are still entertained that Signor Masini may be induced to accept an engagement.

We announced a fortnight ago that Dr. Swinnerton Heap's cantata, *"Fair Rosamund,"* has been set down for performance at the North Staffordshire Festival, which will take place at Hanley on October 1 and 2. The programmes for the two days will also include Mozart's *"Requiem,"* Professor Villiers Stanford's *"Revenge,"* the *"Creation,"* Dr. Parry's ode, *"Blest pair of Sirens,"* and, of course, *"The Golden Legend."* The artists engaged are Madame Nordica, Miss Macintyre, Miss Damian, Messrs. Lloyd, McKay, Foli, and Watkin Mills. Music is evidently progressing in the Potteries.

Apropos of Dr. Heap's Cantata, it is amusing to note that an Italian contemporary not only attributes the music to the late Desmond Ryan, but says that the work will be performed "in London at the Hanley Festival!"

Mr. Sims Reeves commenced his "absolutely final" farewell tour at Southsea on Tuesday, and was received with the greatest enthusiasm. He sang Lindsay Lennox's *"Dream Memories,"* *"Come into the Garden, Maud,"* and *"Tom Bowling."* The company supporting him includes Mrs. Hutchinson, Miss Amy Martin, Mr. Frangcon Davies, Miss Janotha, and Mr. Percy Sharman (violin).

Mr. Henry J. Wood has organised a company for touring in the provinces with his new comedy-opera *"Daisy,"* which proved so successful when performed for copyright purposes at Kilburn Town Hall last May. The tour commences on September 18th, at Theatre Royal, Margate.

A Club of Critics!! We suppose it will be called the "Cain."

MUSICAL CLUBS AND SOCIETIES.

(Continued from page 647.)

The disappearance during a period of so much musical activity as the last few years of once famous and important madrigal and part-song societies is an interesting example of the peculiar manner in which what is commonly termed the development of an art causes neglect of some of its branches. No one will deny that choral singing has made great advances since the days when Henry Leslie's choir was in its pristine glory, or that the performances given by the Royal Choral Society display greater musical acquirements and capabilities on the part of vocalists. The public neglect of the madrigal and glee cannot therefore be attributed to the incapacity of modern singers or conductors. The reason lies deeper—in the change of public taste which has taken place, and which has been chiefly caused by the numerous performances of works of greater length and dramatic interest. However dramatically conceived a madrigal may be, its action lasts but a few minutes, and the following composition has to arouse interest afresh; there is, moreover, no contextual reason for the order of the selection beyond that which is dictated by a desire for contrast of style or key-relationship. Thus the performance of a succession of part-songs or glees, however artistically they may be rendered, becomes monotonous to the ordinary modern concert-goer owing to the want of dramatic continuity.

It may be said that this view does not hold good with other concerts, such as ballad or miscellaneous concerts, the programmes of which are apparently composed on the principle of the Christmas pudding, i.e., "put in as many sweet things as possible and serve hot;" but it will be found on examination of the successful programme even of this kind that each item

has been chosen either on account of its association with some well-known work or because of its individual popularity. It is extremely rare, however, that such calculations can be made with regard to the part-song or madrigal. To some few in an audience pleasant memories may cling round the strains of "Who will o'er the Downs so free," and a limited number of compositions of similar character; but we must turn to the grey-haired and bald-headed to find a smile born of happy reminiscence at the sound of a madrigal. Moreover, signs are not wanting that the days of the box-of-bricks programme are numbered, and that its place in the first rank of public estimation will shortly be occupied by the performance of works in which continuity is maintained and dramatic action more enforced.

The whole history of music may be summed up in two words, "dramatic development," and as that development has progressed the less dramatic forms of expression have been neglected, and thus the forsaking of the part-song and madrigal for the more extended and story-telling cantata is only an inevitable consequence of the rapid progress made during the last few years. The action of this law is seen even in the works which its influence has brought forth. The most popular oratorios and cantatas are, as a rule, those in which the dramatic element is the strongest and continuity the most consistently preserved. The "Elijah" is more popular than "St. Paul." The necessity of a "good book" to an opera is only another way of saying that the work must possess powerful and artistically-developed dramatic interest, and the extravagance and intensity so frequently heard in our concert-rooms are merely the outcome of an endeavour to exert greater dramatic force. It must also be remembered that the latest development in musical expression is the result not only of the progress of musical culture but of the general advancement in manners, customs, and modes of thought, all of which exert a powerful influence on the mind of the artist.

The truly cultured, however, always preserve a feeling of reverence for the works of preceding generations, not merely on account of their intrinsic merit, but as being the progenitors of the present state of progress; and it is to this class we owe the revival of many an old and charming branch of art. It is true the number of the really cultured is comparatively small, but the crowd of those who wish to be thought citizens of the artistic community is enormously great; and hence, whatever the really cultured artists dictate is blindly followed, largely circulated, and often exaggerated until it becomes a ludicrous fashion. Hence the Japanese fan epidemic and gavotte mania. Many of the old madrigals and glees are perfect specimens of a refined and graceful branch of musical art, and therefore will always be attractive to the student and educated musical enthusiast; and it is not therefore improbable that a revival of these interesting and highly-finished compositions may before long take place, more especially as many of the best were composed by Englishmen, and as it now seems to be generally conceded that it does not show a want of artistic perception to express admiration for the works of one's fellow countrymen.

The madrigal and glee may be strongly recommended to the consideration of conductors of local choral societies as affording excellent practice both for independent part reading and the cultivation of expression; moreover it is easier to secure artistic results by a programme partly or wholly made up of compositions of this class carefully chosen with regard to the capabilities of the choir than to give a good performance of a cantata or oratorio; for however powerful may be the conductor's influence over the chorus, his skill avails but little in the solos when they are taken by the amateur members, many of whom in all probability scarcely know what the term "voice production" means. When to this is added the fact that the solos in works of any artistic pretension have been written for some of our leading vocalists, and often make great demands not only on vocal compass but on dramatic power, it at once becomes apparent that it is only in exceptional circumstances, unless professional assistance be called into requisition, that such works can receive adequate renderings from small local choirs. Moreover, the programme made up of madrigals and part-songs and miscellaneous solos, although it might be "behind the times," would in all cases of limited capacities be found to give more satisfaction to all concerned; for many half-trained voices which are acceptable when the solo is carefully chosen becomes; the reverse of agreeable when heard in passages which only highly-cultivated organs can possibly render satisfactorily. Unfortunately the ambition of amateurs, which is generally in inverse proportion to their capability, stands greatly in the way of improvement. The status of a choral society is also more often judged by the catalogue of works it has attempted than by the artistic standard of its performances: the announcement of new or popular works is

often necessary to secure fresh members, and thus the unfortunate conductor is in many cases obliged to place in the hands of his choir compositions which, as a musician, he knows to be beyond their powers. At the same time it is but fair to admit that the ambitious undertakings of many local choirs are frequently justified by results, an example of which was furnished by the Streatham Choral Society which, under the able *bâton* of Mr. Macpherson, gave an admirable performance of Mr MacCunn's "Bonny Kilmeny," at the same time securing the honour of being the first to present this interesting work to a London audience.

Of the larger choirs, such as the Royal Choral Society, the Bach Choir, the Borough of Hackney Choral Association, there is little need to speak. No city can produce finer. Nor is it necessary to describe in detail the more humble efforts of local choirs. Few people but have had some experience of them, in being either asked "to join" or invited to listen to their performances. They offer a fruitful field to the student of human nature. Very few amateur singers have a just estimation of their vocal capabilities, or ever obtain (except from a rival) an honest opinion on their power to charm; and it is to be feared that in too many cases the local amateur derives more pleasure from hearing his own voice than from consideration of the feelings of others. The relative balance of the vocal parts in these societies often causes peculiar and unexpected effects. Quantity is often substituted for quality; or, where appearances are studied, and it is thought advantageous to the society to encourage the diffident, it is not unusual to see a noble row of six basses but to hear the sonorous voice of one. The tenors also are an endless source of anxiety to the much enduring conductor—like one's teeth they are "a bother" to get, a bother to keep, and, when they prove mutinous, a bother to get rid of. The sopranos and altos are generally more manageable, but their numbers are often overwhelming and utterly destructive to tonal balance. But although the rendering of "Elijah" or the "Messiah" under such conditions often produces effects more original than conducive to reverence, the local choral society, notwithstanding its many imperfections and sins of commission and omission, must be regarded as one of the chief pioneers of musical progress. It not only draws lively attention to works of artistic value and elevating tendency, but leads to an intimate acquaintance (which would probably never be otherwise obtained) with their manifold beauties. Intimacy with the beautiful in art leads to discrimination, and thus to appreciation of the best, and this means elevation of the mind of the admirer. Thus the educational influence which choral societies exercise is very great, and it is not too much to say that they have largely contributed to that satisfactory progress of music to which attention is so frequently called. However humble, therefore, and however faulty their individual performances may be, they merit as a body the hearty support of the artistic; and the highest praise and every encouragement should be lavished on those conductors who by musicianly skill and the exercise of a diplomacy second only to that of a prime minister, overcome the obstacles of half or wholly untrained voices, musical ignorance, jealousy and vanity, and eventually give finished and artistic performances of important compositions.

It is pleasant, therefore, to notice that such societies are increasing in number and importance, and that they meet with so much support. Of late also small amateur orchestral societies have been formed in connection with them, and the accompaniments have much gained in consequence. It is true that the uncomfortable inability to remain for many bars in tune which the amateur violinist so often displays is trying to those gifted with ears, and the glances shot from the orbs of the "prima donna" on the "obligato" performer often bestir the imagination of the meditative listener as to the form of compliments which will be afterwards exchanged in the artist's room: but still the presence of a few "strings" by the side of the ubiquitous piano is ever welcome, if only as indicative of an awakening to the fact that everything cannot be satisfactorily reproduced on the piano. So greatly indeed are many modern choral works dependent for their due effect on the orchestral scoring, that no conductor worthy of the name would attempt their performance without he could count upon this support; and even in works which depend less on the efficient rendering of the instrumental portions of the score the pianoforte "arrangement" (or more truly "compression") is for the most part as ineffective as it is ungrateful to the unfortunate accompanist.

Mention should be made also, if only out of courtesy, of those "Ladies' Choral Societies" which now and again call forth the critic's remarks. In these it must be admitted London does not shine. Although the *répertoire* of this kind of music is not large, it contains much that is admirable and worthy of being frequently heard. The recent invasion from Cardiff showed

how charming this branch of musical art can be made, and indeed some of the most engaging choruses in modern works are those in which the male voice is absent, and richness of tone and harmonic basis secured by clever orchestration. But somehow the Ladies' Choir does not seem to flourish in the metropolis any more than the glee and madrigal societies which once were so successful. If it were not for the decadence of the latter many, doubtless, would suggest that the lack of high-class Ladies' Choirs was due to the absence of gentlemen in such societies—as it is, those who would speak in defence of the ladies can, with small fear of contradiction, attribute their want of enthusiasm in this particular to absence of public appreciation.

Viewed as a whole, there is much cause for congratulation on the state of music as exhibited this season. There is, of course, room for improvement in almost all branches, and we have not escaped the evils of superficiality more or less always attendant on rapid progress; hence the extravagance and sentimentality which are mistaken for dramatic power; but signs of the spread of artistic principles and perception are abundantly present on all sides, and for this we owe gratitude not only to the hard-working and conscientious professional, but to the large number of intellectual and artistic amateurs who are the mainspring of the almost countless musical clubs and societies which have exerted, and, let us hope, will still exert so beneficial an influence on the progress of art.

THE FIRST OPERA.

A NOVELETTE BY HECTOR BERLIOZ.

[CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 656.]

ALFONSO DELLA VIOLA TO BENVENUTO CELLINI.

FLORENCE, JUNE 23, 1557.

Yes, Cellini, it is true. To the Grand Duke I owe an unpardonable humiliation—to you I owe my celebrity, my fortune, and perhaps my life. I swore that I would revenge myself—and have not done it. I had promised you most solemnly never to receive from his hands either employment or honors.—I have not kept my word. It was at Ferrara that Francesca was heard (thanks to you for it) and applauded for the first time; it was also at Florence that it was treated as a work totally void of sense and reason. And while Ferrara, where they wished to have my new composition produced, did not obtain it, I do homage with it to the Grand Duke. Yes, the Tuscans, formerly so disdainful toward me, rejoice at the preference that I grant them; they are proud of it; their fanaticism surpasses by far all you tell me about that of the French.

The people are flocking in to hear my opera from every town in Tuscany. Even the Pisans and Siennois, forgetting their ancient hatred, sue beforehand for the hospitality of Florence on the great day. Cosmo, delighted with the success of one whom he calls "his artist," begins to entertain brilliant hopes for the result which this approach of three rival cities may have on his policy and government. He overwhelms me with attention and flattery. Yesterday he gave in my honour a magnificent collation at the Palace Pitti, where all the noble families of the city were assembled. The handsome Countess of Vallombrosa bestowed on me her sweetest smiles; the Grand Duchess condescended to sing a madrigal with me. Della Viola is the man of the day, the man of Florence, the man of the Grand Duke; they rely upon him.

I am very culpable, very contemptible, very mean; am I not? Well! Cellini, if you come to Florence on July 28 next, wait for me from 8 to 9 o'clock in the evening at the door of the Baptistaire. I shall there look for you. And if with the first words of our conversation I do not completely justify myself in reference to everything you reproach me with—if I do not give you an explanation of my conduct which will satisfy you on all points—then double your disdain, treat me as you would the meanest of men, kick me, strike me with your whip, spit in my face, and I will agree beforehand that I have merited all. Until then keep your friendship for me; you will soon see that I never was more worthy of it.

Yours,

ALFONSO DELLA VIOLA.

On the evening of the 28th of July, a tall man, with a sombre and discontented look, directed his steps through the streets of Florence, toward

the square of the Grand Duke. Having arrived before the bronze statue of Perseus, he contemplated it for a long time with the greatest attention—it was Benvenuto. Although the answer and the protestations of Alfonso had made but little impression on his mind, he had for a long time been connected with the young composer by too sincere and too ardent a friendship to be able thus in a few days to efface it for ever from his heart. He had not sufficient courage to refuse to hear what Della Viola might bring forth, to justify himself, and was then on his way to the Baptistry, where Alfonso had promised to meet him, when the wish arose in his heart to see again, after his long absence, the masterpiece that had caused him so much trouble and sorrow. The square and the neighbouring streets were deserted—the most profound silence reigned in that quarter, generally so populous and noisy. The artist contemplated his immortal work, asking himself if obscurity and a common mind would not have been preferable to fame and genius. "Why am I not a cow-herd of Nettuns or of Porto-d'Anzis," thought he—"resembling the animals entrusted to my care? I should lead a life humble and monotonous, but at least inaccessible to the troubles which have since my childhood tormented my life. Perfidious and jealous rivals—unjust and ungrateful princes—hot-headed critics—foolish flatterers—constant changes of success and misfortune, of splendour and misery—excessive and continually increasing labours—no repose, no happiness, no leisure moments—to use one's body like a hireling, and to feel one's soul constantly chilled or burning—can that be called living?"

The noisy exclamation of three young artisans, who passed rapidly over the square, interrupted his meditation. "Six florins!" said one of them, "that is dear."

"Even if he asked ten," replied another, "we should have had to pay it. These rascally Pisans have taken all the seats. Besides, consider, Antonio, that the gardener's house is about twenty paces from the pavilion; seated on the roof, we shall see and hear perfectly well; the doors of the little subterranean canal will be opened, and we will get there without difficulty."

"Bah!" added the third, "to hear such music, we can well afford to fast a little for a few weeks. You know what effect yesterday the grand rehearsal produced. The Court only was admitted; the Grand Duke and his suite did not cease applauding; the players carried Della Viola about in triumph, and the Countess of Vallombrosa, in her ecstasy, embraced him; it must be wonderful."

"But look, how deserted the streets are; all the city is assembled at the Palace Pitti. It is time for us to be there. Let us run!"

Then only Cellini understood that they spoke of the grand musical festival, the day and hour of which had already arrived. This circumstance did not at all agree with the choice that Alfonso had made of the night for his meeting. How could the maestro at such a moment abandon his orchestra, and leave the important post, to which so much interest attached him. It was difficult to conceive.

The sculptor, nevertheless, went to the Baptistry, where he found his two pupils, Paulo and Ascanio, with horses; he was to set out that very night for Leghorn, whence he was the following day to embark for Naples.

He had waited but a few minutes when Alfonso, with a pale face and glowing eyes, presented himself before him, affecting a calmness which was not usual with him.

"Cellini!—you are here; I thank you."

"Well?"

"It is this evening!"

"I know it. But speak! I wait for the explanation you promised me."

"The Palace Pitti, the gardens and yards are crowded. The multitude presses against the walls, in the basins half full of water, on the roofs, on the trees, in short, everywhere."

"I know it."

"The Pisans have come, and the Siennois also."

"I know it."

"The Grand Duke, the court, and the nobility have arrived; an immense orchestra is assembled."

"I know it."

"But the music is not there," said Alfonso, jumping up, "nor is the maestro there; do you know that also?"

"How? What do you mean?"

"No, there is no music, because I have taken it away; there is no maestro, because I am here; there will be no musical feast, because the work and the author have disappeared. A note from me is just informing the Grand Duke that my composition will not be produced. *It does not*

suit me any more.' I wrote to him, making use of his own words. I also, in my turn, have changed my mind. Can you now conceive the rage of the people, who have been disappointed for the second time; the anger of those persons who have left their city, abandoned their occupations and spent their money to hear my music, and who now will not hear it? Before I came here to meet you, I watched them; they began to show some impatience, and laid all the fault on the Grand Duke. Do you see now what my plan is, Cellini?"

"I begin to understand."

"Come, come, let us approach nearer to the palace; let us see my mine exploding. Do you hear those shouts, that tumult, those imprecations? Oh, my brave Pisans, I recognize you in your unbridled language! Do you see the stones fly, and the branches of trees and pieces of crockery? None but the Siennois can throw them so beautifully? Take care, or we shall be upset; how they run! these are Florentines; they assail the pavilion! Good! Behold there that pile of mud in the ducal box; it is fortunate for the great Cosmo that he left it. Down with the amphitheatre! down with the desks, the benches, and the windows! down with the box; down with pavilion! See, it gives way! They destroy every thing, Cellini! This is a magnificent uproar! Honour to the Grand Duke!!! Ah! you took me for a coward! Speak, are you satisfied? Is this vengeance?"

Cellini, with his lips compressed and his nostrils dilated, watched, without replying, the terrible spectacle of an infuriated populace; his eyes shone with a sinister fire, from his square forehead fell large drops of perspiration, and the almost imperceptible trembling of his limbs sufficiently showed the savage intensity of his joy. At last he seized the arm of Alfonso and cried: "I go instantly to Naples, will you follow me?"

"To the end of the world!"

"Embrace me, and then—to horse! You are a hero!"

MODERN PIANISM.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL WORLD."

SIR: In your last issue you quoted a lengthy article on "Woman in Music," from the pen of Mrs. Fanny Bloomfield, the great American pianist. I conclude, therefore, that you consider her opinion to be of some value, and, as I scarcely feel competent to join in the discussion now being so actively carried on in your columns concerning modern pianism, I should like to draw your attention to the following paragraphs which I have just seen quoted in an American paper, and attributed to her. They are headed "True Interpretation," and are as follows:—

"The objective artist has of necessity first to analyse the composition, to reason out the possible or probable intentions of the composer, and then to make up his mind as to the mode and manner and all the details of his interpretation.

"Having once reached a conclusion in this regard, his rendering will be the same every time he plays the composition.

"This, again, involves the consequence that the objective artist's rendition lacks life, warmth, and spontaneity; that it becomes stale, monotonous, and uninteresting after a single hearing, and will be unable to touch sympathetic chords in the hearts of his listeners, who will only be moved by what is often called personal magnetism—a quality possessed only by the subjective artist.

"The subjective player, on the other hand, if he be a true artist—if he be gifted with the so-called divine spark—will intuitively do justice to the peculiar characteristics of the different composers, and at the same time allow his individuality to enter into the performance, and will suffer his feelings to influence his interpretation sufficiently to give new life to the creation, and will awaken in the auditors feelings akin to and not less vivid than the ones animating himself.

"Instead of becoming monotonous, his every new rendering of the same piece will be shaped according to the emotions which happen to then sway his heart, and thus he will really recompose the composition every time he plays it."

As I have said, Sir, I do not feel competent to enter the lists myself; but you will gather from the above quotation that were I to dress myself to the combat I should fight upon the side of "H. R. L." and "Norfolk Broad," who, although their weapons are different, are battling against the same enemy. I hope they will win. May I offer them another weapon in

the shape of a few sentences from the pen of Dr. Hanslick which seem to be *à propos*? The famous critic says:—

"There is no art the forms of which wear out so soon and so extensively as music. Modulations, cadences, progressions of intervals and harmonies become so obsolete in fifty or even thirty years that the composer of genius can no longer use them, but is compelled continually to invent new purely musical features.

"All that can justly be said of a mass of compositions which stood far above the average of their day is that they once were beautiful.

"The fancy of the artist of genius discovers among the infinite number of possible combinations those that are the most choice and hidden, and works them into novel musical forms which, though they are purely the offspring of his own free will, seem connected by an invisible thread with the dictates of necessity."

I am, Sir,

Obediently yours,

A FIGHTER BY PROXY.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL WORLD."

SIR: I wish with all my heart you had not initiated this correspondence on the subject of Modern Pianism—and on some other subjects thereto allied. Up to now I had been content with my own ideas, which I vaguely supposed not to differ greatly from those generally accepted by the majority of serious musical amateurs. I may perhaps summarise them as follows:

1. That when a great musician had written a work it was not the business of smaller men to improve upon it.
2. That every great work could be, and might justifiably be exhibited in various slightly differing lights, and that we ought to be much obliged to such artists as were able to do this with sympathy and judgment.
3. That music was essentially an "ideal" art, and that to insist that every piece of music (or say first-class music) must have one meaning, and one meaning only, would be to say not only what is contrary to its nature as generally accepted, but more or less degrading in itself. And now I find that every one of these propositions is distinctly disputed by one or other of your correspondents. "H. R. L." distinctly contradicts me on the first, being also supported by "A Reverent Radical." "Z" (I infer) disputes the second, and for certain he would join issue on the third. Others again, such as "An Antiquary," "Norfolk Broad," and "J. S. S.," I can frequently agree with. It has been said that "in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom," but Sir, I regret to say that I have not as yet been able to find it. The truth is, perhaps, when one comes to look into the matter, that your correspondents are fighting round two different points: one the right of making alterations in another man's work, and secondly, the right of performers to interpret a composer's work in different ways. If you will allow room for so insignificant a combatant as myself, I should like to say that on the first point it seems to me that the conservatives, represented by "J. S. S.," have it, and that on the second point the views of "Norfolk Broad" can hardly be refuted. I would not, if I can help it, repeat any already well-worn arguments, and therefore on the first matter I will content myself with mentioning two points. (1) We do not permit of any such alteration in works of any other kind of art. What should we say to Raffaele's "Madonna di San Sisto" (modernised by . . .), or "Sea-view" by Vandervelde (the ship by Clarkson Stanfield). "Norfolk Broad," I regret to see, speaks with sympathy of modernised versions of Chaucer, I had hoped such things were unknown in the present day, and, having regard to the true artistic feeling which his views seem to exhibit, I am at a loss to understand how he can tolerate them. My second point is that if you wish to get into sympathy with past ages it must be done by your throwing yourself back into their time, and not by attempts to "titivate" them up so as to be fit for the society of your own time. Of course there are numbers of persons who cannot throw themselves into the spirit of past ages; such persons may well be content with the music of their own day. I cannot see why the music of past ages should be perverted to satisfy the small degree of interest that they ever take in the result. As "J. S. S." justly observes, it violates a very sound principle (and, I would add, violates it for an infinitesimally small gain). It would be difficult to prove that any old-fashioned work has ever been made really popular by modern alterations.

The second point in dispute covers a much wider field, and is of far greater importance. Originally it was only whether pianists were at liberty to play works in whatever fashion they conceived them: but your correspondent "Z" carries the matter farther back, and boldly stands up

for one form of interpretation, and one only, viz., that which he declares to represent—"The Composer's Intention." Now this of course involves the supposition that the composer had one particular meaning, and one only. Will "Z" kindly explain what authority he has for this idea of a composer's mode of working? I have studied as carefully as my capacity will permit me the words printed in capitals in his last letter, and still I am not happy. "The artist's mood" (he says) "presents itself to the world in the form of a piece of music." But either the "mood" must remain the same throughout, which would be a "mood" in which very few pieces of great music have been written, or the "mood" must be constantly changing in accordance with the requirements of the musical treatment, which is in fact a submission to some element apart from the composer's "mood" at the time of writing. My contention is that when a great composer writes a great work—instrumental, of course, for vocal music admits of no dispute as to its meaning—he would be likely to start with some phrase suggested by the chief aspect of his subject; that then various developments of his subject, sometimes picturesque, sometimes philosophic (or intellectual), sometimes purely formal, gradually present themselves, and that these the author works up into an artistic form. I am not sure whether "Z" would or would not accept this description of the probable genesis of an artistic work. Probably not, as he seems desirous of excluding everything that may not be called simply "emotional matter," whereas I fear I attribute a rather large proportion of any great musical work to a picturesque or formal origin. Even supposing that all music ought to be regarded as only the expression of emotion, is it a fact that all emotion is so definite that it can be entered as it were in a musical Johnson's Dictionary, and may not be interpreted in any other than the Johnsonian or "Z"—ian sense. I trow not. Berlioz, for instance, was a person who habitually gave violent expression to his emotions; and I could conceive that the passage which represented (perhaps) his indignation at an ill-cooked chop or a band that played out of tune might seem to me to represent the emotions excited by the French Revolution or the end of all things. There is a little anecdote in "G's" analysis of Mendelssohn's overture, "Meerestille" which seems to me *à propos*. Some one said to the author that a certain passage seemed to him to represent love by force of energy fulfilling its own desires. Mendelssohn replied that he had not thought of that, but that he had fancied a funny old man sitting in the stern of the ship, and blowing with his puffed-out cheeks to fill the sails. Ergo, if it were possible for a conductor to perform the passage in such a manner as to suggest this idea, that would be, according to "Z," an ideal performance, inasmuch as it exactly realised "the composer's intention." In fact, I venture to unite with "Norfolk Broad" in protesting against the attempt to attach to music any one definite interpretation which is to be considered legitimate because it represents "the composer's intention." Music is pre-eminently the "ideal" art, and this pinning it down to one definite meaning is, to me, the destruction of its most beautiful characteristic, which is, as "Norfolk Broad" justly observes, its power to translate us to the World of Dreams. "My eyes make pictures when they're shut," says Coleridge, and I claim that our ears should make us do the same when they're open. In another beautiful verse the same great imaginative poet speaks of

Hopes, and fears that kindle hope,
An indistinguishable throng;

from which it would seem that he hardly recognised the absolute separate individuality of each and every emotion. But I must not intrude any further on your valuable space. I can only thank you for permitting me thus far the expression of these imperfectly-expressed opinions.

I am, Sir,

Yours faithfully,
HABITANS IN SICCO.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL WORLD."

SIR: Your contributor, "Norfolk Broad," is a dangerous man: his clever pen makes one at times forget the sophistry of his reasoning. With his well-turned sentences and his poetical conceits he will—if you continue to print his letters—make people believe (especially those who do not think for themselves) that Mr. Dormer and "J. S. S." are trying to destroy the "dream-element" of art.

"Try to shut your golden prisoner within rigid walls and you will lose it utterly." These are "Norfolk Broad's" words, and they are intended as

answer to Mr. Dormer. It is a pretty sounding sentence, but as false as it is pretty. The "golden prisoner" is the "dream-stuff" of the music: the "rigid walls" are the notes by which that "dream-stuff" is conveyed to us. "Norfolk Broad" is a discontented pilgrim on earth. He talks of "rigid walls," but it is only through those very walls that we can reach the "dream-stuff." If one pulls them down the "dream-stuff" escapes; surely then one ought to jealously guard those walls which enclose so precious a treasure. "Norfolk Broad" would evidently like to live in a land of dreams; the material world is too gross for him; his "home is in Heaven." But here on earth as the soul is imprisoned within the body, so are the beautiful dreams of genius enclosed in words, colours and tones. The poet wraps his thoughts in words, yet the two are intimately connected. Shakespeare in French is no longer the real Shakespeare. When the painter's colour begins to fade so does his dream. And the composer's ideas cannot be separated from the notes without loss to the former. Ries once proposed to alter a chord in one of Beethoven's works, but the master replied, "It is best as written."

"Norfolk Broad's" quarrel is rather with the world in which he lives, moves, and has his being than with Mr. Dormer and "J. S. S." Time pulls the "walls" down fast enough, but they are not disposed to lend a helping hand. They are willing to repair the walls when a breach has been made, but not to aid in the work of destruction. Of course when the walls grow old and tottery the "dream-stuff" suffers in proportion, but the walls can no longer be rebuilt as at first: at best can they be patched up. It is of course sad to see the monuments of genius crumbling gradually to pieces; but man was born to sorrow. Restoration, even by the most skilful hands, is but poor work. "Bringing up to date" is an unsatisfactory process, and altering without thought, or for the sake of vain display, the height of foolishness or irreverence. Possibly "Norfolk Broad" may think so too, but to regard the interpreter as "another span of the bridge" built by the composer opens the door to all sorts of licence.

It is a pity that so earnest a man as "Norfolk Broad" evidently is should condescend to such reasoning as this. Mr. Dormer asserts that "a man has no more right to alter a single note in a musical master-work than he has to alter a single word in an epic poem." Whereupon "Norfolk Broad" replies: "This is as much as to say that he who cannot read Chaucer in his original dress or Shakespeare must not read him at all. No living student must revise the doubtful spelling of the First Folio and conjecture emendations of inexplicable passages, or collate various readings of various editions." Mr. Dormer refers to wilful alterations. There are some doubtful passages in the works of Bach and Beethoven, and I cannot imagine that Mr. Dormer would even object to having them revised, although we have the composer's autograph manuscripts. The First Folio is not in Shakespeare's handwriting. There are no "inexplicable passages" in the works of the great musicians similar to those we meet with in old writers, and therefore the comparison is a bad one. The "inexplicable passages" in Shakespeare arise from the fact that the original text (which no longer exists) has been corrupted. To emendate is a legitimate attempt at restoration.

I am, Sir, etc.,

ANTI-GUSH.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL WORLD."

SIR: I have studied with some attention the "Dream Theory" of art as formulated by your correspondent Mr. "Norfolk Broad," and find it, I regret to say, the reverse of satisfying. The view which he expounds with so much eloquence is, it seems to me, only a half-truth. It describes, I admit, with admirable precision the practice of a school of artists whose work has of late years been somewhat prominent; but I should be sorry to think that this school is likely to be permanent, and I emphatically deny that its productions have any right to be called "great." Art which owes its origin to a fit of vague dreaming on the part of its creator may perhaps satisfy the needs of those who seek to while away an idle hour more or less agreeably, and to be spared as much as possible the exercise of their intellectual faculties; but such vaguely-felt impressions are surely not worthy to be called "emotions." They "come like shadows, so depart"; belong rather to the region of sentiment than of emotion; and in the Natural History of Art must assuredly be classed among the order of Invertebrates.

Of course it is true, in a certain sense, to say of a great work of art that it is a "bridge by which we may pass into the land of dreams," or to speak of the brain of a great artist as teeming with "such stuff as dreams are made of"; but this "dream-stuff" is only the raw material. Great art-work differs from inferior in degree not only

of emotional power but also of emotional definiteness, and in the evidence it gives of high intelligence having directed "with a sweet continual control" the flow of these emotional forces. Great art, Sir, is that which, though intellectual, is never cold; which, though emotional, is never meaningless or incoherent. It follows that before our dreams (I speak now of waking ones) can become art in the higher sense they must be dealt with by the intellect. This implies purpose* on the part of the artist, and the moment this is admitted the contention of "Norfolk Broad," that the interpreter has absolute freedom, falls to the ground. The interpreter has freedom only in the case of works the emotional character of which is vague and indefinite. Such are (1) the works of nearly all composers before music had acquired its present wealth of emotional utterance; and (2) works written since its acquirement of this, but by composers of inferior capacity. In the first case the composer's meaning cannot be ascertained with certainty: in the second "it really doesn't matter."

I remain, &c., Z.

TO THE EDITOR OF "THE MUSICAL WORLD."

SIR: "Norfolk Broad's" "plastic, fluid," and mutable imagination has so strangely misinterpreted my letter that I venture again to trespass on your courtesy, more especially as there is reason to believe that his charmingly expressed, somewhat wild sentiments are in more or less degree shared by others whose ideas of the artistic in pianoforte music have been chiefly derived from the sensational or extravagant performances given in our concert-rooms during the last two or three seasons.

"Norfolk Broad" asks what it is we expect from a work of art and from an artist. Surely this is not the question—the point is not what this or that more or less capricious, more or less artistic person expects; our duty is to ascertain the nature of the originating force whose action results in the production of a great work of art. It is easy to show that this force is a definite and unambiguous emotion; and it necessarily follows that we have a right to demand from the performer of such a masterpiece the faithful reproduction of the notes, accentuation, phrasing, &c., &c., marked by the composer; in short, a reproduction as nearly as possible of the emotion which animated the composer when he wrote; and only the expression of the performer's feelings in so far as they accord and are consistent with the spirit of the music. It is obvious that the apprehension of this spirit can only be acquired by an intelligent study of all that pertains to the composer in his artistic relations; and this, it is equally obvious, is the duty of every pianist—for the spirit is the life.

"Norfolk Broad" says: "An art-work has one supreme office—to make you dream," and "it is a matter of less moment that we should receive with exactness the impression which was created on the artist's mind by what he thought he saw than that his music should become a kind of bridge by which we may pass into the land of dreams." Now a dream is an inconsequent and illogical series of imperfectly-remembered impressions—a vague jumble of incoherent ideas utterly uncontrolled by intellect. It is to this mental state that the performance of master-works is to reduce us! The idea is new, but scarcely flattering to composers, whose mission is thus reduced to that of a cigar or a sleeping draught. Moreover, it is a little difficult to see where the elevating tendency and intellectual stimulus comes in! Surely Beethoven's sonatas are worthy of a better definition than that of "dream stuff?"

Again, according to "Norfolk Broad's" theories, any pianist who from ignorance or incapacity takes an opposite view to that of truly great and artistic players would be perfectly justified (in order to enforce his "dreams") in making any alterations in the composer's text. "Norfolk Broad" apparently forgets that imagination attains its highest artistic standard when controlled by the intellect, and that unless based on knowledge it is little better than school-girl emotionalism. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," he says: just so, but when truth is neither adhered to nor sought for, the conception of beauty is apt to be false.

Yours faithfully,

F. COURTENAY DORMER.

* See my letter of last week for definition of this "purpose" or "intention."

To the artist the form is not the substance but the mould of the subject-matter, and the two are therefore practically one and inseparable.—A. B. Mars.

The Dramatic World.

THE SEASON.

LONDON, WEDNESDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 1890.

MY DEAR MR. FIELDMOUSE,—

I suppose that at last the season really is over—even the House of Commons has torn itself away from its beloved Westminster, and is self-exiled to lonely grouse moors, where not even the voice of Sir George Campbell raises its cheery strain. All delights must have an end, and the woe-begone dramatic critic sits on the Engadine, his occupation gone, with not so much as a *matinée* to relieve his gloom. London is at rest, and one can fearlessly walk down Regent-street carrying large brown-paper parcels—an occupation which to the simple mind has a singular charm.

I admit that I like London in August, and regret only that the lull is so brief—for this week is the first of utter calm (in the world of plays) and next week will be very nearly the last thereof. Soon, very soon, will Drury Lane reopen, and Mr. Augustus Harris hide his modesty with a flourish of trumpets; and after that the deluge, once again.

Meanwhile, in this halcyon hour when London is as tranquil as your Buckinghamshire village—having indeed little more than four millions of inhabitants just now—the time seems fitting for a brief survey of the Season just gone by, the first half of this present year of 1890.

It has been a brisk, busy kind of season in its way, though it may not have achieved very much. We have had magazine discussions, French and American companies, a good deal of Shakespeare, and our only Jones; but perhaps the most notable features of the half-year that is gone have been the "fizzling-out" of the child-drama—which began with "Little Lord Fauntleroy" and ended (let us hope) with "Nixie" and "Prince and Pauper"—and, I am sorry to say, the rush of French adaptations, which one had thought to be somewhat slackened of late years. The season would have been but an empty one without the "Pair of Spectacles," the "Village Priest," "La Tosca," "Theodora," "Dr. Bill," "Esther Sandraz," "Welcome Little Stranger," "The Bungalow," "Your Wife," "Sowing and Reaping," "Nerves," and other transmutations into richer or baser metals of ore quarried from the Parisian mine. A year or two ago it seemed as if our dramatists were going to turn over a new leaf, and be as original as they knew how; but it seems that only two of our comedy-writers—Mr. Pinero and Mr. Jones—are faithful to this resolution.

It is in virtue of this faith that Mr. Jones has been the most interesting of this season's dramatists. The production of Mr. Pinero's new play at the Garrick has been postponed—perhaps for very many months—by the hardly-expected success of the "Pair of Spectacles;" and his farce at the Court, with all its wit, is too purely a joke to be of any great importance. Mr. Grundy has, perhaps, scarcely had justice done him for his share in "The Village Priest"—only an adapted melodrama, it is true, yet (especially in its earlier acts) a very strong and moving play, of which nearly all that was good was his own.

But, with "The Middleman" to begin the season and "Judah" to end it, the honours of 1890 have undoubtedly been Mr. Jones's, so far; and this, I take it, principally on account of the quality which a foolish satirist has just put foremost among this author's faults. Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, says a writer in a comic paper



SIGNOR FOLI.

From a photograph by ELLIOTT and FRY.

only last week, "takes himself and his Art (in the largest of capital letters) with appalling earnestness"—which is perfectly true and the highest of compliments to the dramatist. More, the main fault I have to find with Mr. Jones is that at one time he did not take himself seriously enough, and condescended to write very bad plays of the "Lord Harry" type. Now he means to give us his best, and he does; and a very good best it consequently is.

Why do not other writers follow in his footsteps? Mr. Grundy's name is made, and, I should hope, his fortune—as the fortunes of literary people go. Why does he not take himself seriously, and let us have the very best work his brilliant mind can do—pictures of our English society as his English eyes have seen it, not mere engravings, however exquisite, after French artists, however great? And Mr. Robert Buchanan, who has written such poetry as the beautiful "Dead Mother" and the "Ballad of Judas Iscariot"—have we heard his last word of romance or of observation in the "English Rose"? I am a great admirer of Mr. Buchanan, at his highest; and I cannot think so.

It is well for the past season that it has had a good deal of Shakespeare; yet, looking at the ordinary doings of the theatre in a large German town, or remembering how much of Molière is played yearly at the Comédie Française, one can but blush to think how little Shakespeare "a good deal" for London is. (And the provinces—ah, how sad a thing are our British provinces, for the theatres in them and what they do!)

Still, Mr. Benson's experiment at the Globe was a brave one, and anything but useless, though it failed; and at least he gave us four of Shakespeare's plays last winter, which was as much as all the other theatres put together. Other experiments are talked of; a *Théâtre Libre*, perhaps at the unhappy Novelty, and "Monday nights" at the Haymarket—which should do real good, if they only survive the first six months—and author-managers, limited-liability-company managers, and other daring novelties of the oldest kind.

There has been (as you will too well remember!) an altogether exhaustive magazine-controversy on the subject of actor-management; indeed, the magazines are nowadays nothing if not dramatic, and give all the space they can spare from Mr. Stanley to the theatres. And, on the whole, this is good and does good; because it shows that reading people—of whom probably a certain percentage are thinking people—are interested in the stage, and it increases their interest and their knowledge.

Another sign of the times—of a very different kind—is the unmistakable revival of farcical comedy, which, after having been pronounced at death's door any time these dozen years, now holds undisputed possession of some nine theatres at least, and even ventures to take the stage at the Lyceum when Mr. Irving is away. "Our Flat" is now well on in its second year; and "The Cabinet Minister," "The Judge," "The Solicitor"—there is a marked originality about all these titles—"Dr. Bill," "New Lamps for Old," "The Bungalow," "Nerves," and "Welcome Little Stranger" have all had their followings, often pretty large ones. This predominance of farce is not perhaps altogether matter for rejoicing; but one may be glad that it has cleared the field of burlesque. Apart from the Gaiety, whose variety entertainment draws crowded houses from October till July, there is not now a burlesque-theatre in London.

And in the Sixties there was hardly a theatre where burlesques were not played—and I went to them all and loved them! The moral of which is so obvious that for once I refrain to draw it; and, adding merely that a faithful few got much pleasure from the French Plays at Her Majesty's and many more were delighted with

Daly and his doings at the Lyceum, I will satisfy your just expectations by concluding with the traditional line of Mackworth Praed

Goodnight to the season—Goodnight!

Your reminiscant,

MUS IN URBE.

THE DRAMATISTS.

XLIII.—HANS SACHS.

German dramatic literature began, like all others, with rude "mysteries," or masques, setting forth the traditions of the religion of the country, or in some manner inculcating morality, or celebrating the praises of the object of worship: in whatever form, religious exercises, and performed generally by servants of the Church.

This eldest form of the drama was not perhaps later in awaking in Germany than elsewhere, but a single step beyond it was all that the German theatre made while England, Spain, and even France were producing their magnificent dramatic literatures; and this single step would have been a very short one had it not been taken by a man of genius—Hans Sachs.

For a writer who is but a name to the vast majority of English readers—not a single translation into our language of any of his works is catalogued at the British Museum—it is wonderful how popular among us is Hans Sachs. Doubtless of late years Wagner's opera has made him a household word to many lovers of music who had never heard of him before; but there is a homely picturesqueness about this poet-shoemaker, this chief man of the Nuremberg Guild of Master-Singers, that has always kept him alive in the people's memory.

Wagner's "Meister-Singer" gives us a very just picture of the old poet in what we may call the third period of his life, if, after the fashion of modern biographers, we split his career into four quarters; for one may assume that a man of his vigour and geniality would be the most likely to rise above the pedantries of the Guild of Singers—on whom, as a body, Wagner is hardly severe enough, for it would seem that in truth the Beckmesser of Wagner's opera, and not the Sachs or the Pogner, was the type of the master-singer as he was. Never was poetry so bound down, never had the poor Muse to dance her hornpipes in fetters so heavy, as in the days of these Singer-Guilds, in which (as Carlyle says) "poetry was taught and practised like any other handicraft, and this by sober and well-meaning men, chiefly artisans, who could not understand why labour, which manufactured so many things, should not also manufacture another."

Hans Sachs is lucky in that, besides having his portrait painted at full-length by Wagner, Thomas Carlyle has also cut for him one of those little cameos, in which, struck out in half-a-dozen lines deep and clear, the likeness lives for ever. Here, in a hundred words, is the poet's whole life:—"Of these tuneful guild-brethren, Hans Sachs, by trade a shoemaker, is greatly the most noted and most notable. His father was a tailor; he himself learned the mystery of song under one Nunnebeck, a weaver. He was an adherent of his great contemporary Luther, who has even deigned to acknowledge his services in the cause of the Reformation. How diligent a labourer Sachs must have been will appear from the fact that in his seventy-fourth year (1568), on examining his stock for publication, he found that he had written 6,048 poetical pieces, among which were 208 tragedies and comedies; and this besides having a l along kept house, like an honest Nürnberg burgher, by assiduous and sufficient shoemaking!"

And here, in three lines, is his character:—"Hans is not without genius and a shrewd irony; and, above all, the most gay, childlike, yet devout and solid character. A man neither to be despised nor patronised; but left standing on his own basis, as a singular product, and a still legible symbol and clear mirror of the time and country where he lived." This was Hans Sachs, poet, satirist, Lutheran and dramatist: of an enormous popularity in his own day, which was followed by a long neglect, till it was revived by the admiration of Goethe.

We have said that his life may be divided into four parts. In the first were his education—not a bad one, by any means, for his time—his apprenticeship, and his *Wanderjahren*. Born in 1494 (on "Guy Fawkes' Day"), he was sent to school to learn Latin in the first year of the next century, at fourteen he was put to the trade of shoemaker, and at seven-

teen "apprenticed in the delightful art of song." Then he set forth on his travels, like a true German 'prentice-lad, wandering from his native Nuremberg to Ratisbon, Passau, Salzburg, Halle, Monaco, Frankfurt, Wurzburg; sojourning in Cologne and Coblenz; huntsman for awhile at Court to the Emperor Maximilian; visiting Leipsic, Lubeck, Osnaburg, Erfurt, Vienna; everywhere learning and practising song and shoemaking, and leading everywhere a pure and simple life.

When he was twenty-one he returned to Nuremberg and received as a master-shoemaker; and a few years later—in 1519—he not only seems, according to a French historian, to have been admitted as a master to the Singers' Guild, but he also certainly got married. His wife was a handsome girl named Cunegunda Kreutzer, and they had some forty years of wedded happiness—not to mention a family of seven. When, in or about the year 1560, Cunegunda died—her five sons having gone before her to the grave—Hans Sachs did not long remain lonely; he married again the next year, and lived happily the remaining eighteen years of his long life with his second wife, the beautiful Barbara Harschner.

But to return to what one may call the second period of Sachs' career: it was devoted partly to the study of the ancient German poets and the great Italians—Petrarch, and above all Boccaccio—but in chief to the sturdy upholding of the cause of Luther, "The Nightingale of Wittemberg," as in his famous poem Sachs called him. Though the subject of his earliest poems was almost exclusively the glorification of marriage and the defence of its sanctity, these were followed by a period of satire, by ten years of denunciation, austere and almost savage, of the unworthiness of men, the depravity of the time and the State; and Sachs, genuine Reformer as he was, was one of the first to realise the dangers and difficulties of Protestantism.

Then, as the century passed its mid-year, and Hans began to leave middle-age behind, a genial and even jovial tone gradually took the place of this severer spirit. Perhaps his jolly farces, his "Shrovetide-Plays," are the works by which the wise shoemaker is best remembered; and in them—like Steele, according to Thackeray's famous eulogy—he made fun of vice instead of scourging it. The fun was rather broad, as one might expect from a disciple of Boccaccio; but it was, in the main, hearty and healthy.

Nor, in despite of the extreme simplicity of their form, was there a lack of the true dramatic feeling in his plays—were they the national farces or "Dolorous Tragedies" (as he christened them) founded on such stories as those of Patient Grissel, or the Pot of Basil. Goethe, indeed, thought some of his most characteristic plays worthy to be placed, in a form somewhat modernised, upon the stage.

"Last scene of all," even in the pleasant life of Sachs, was a time of some sadness. His plays complain of the decay of art, of the selfishness of mankind; but one must remember that the last ten years, perhaps, of his life were made lonely by the same curse that fell upon Beethoven. He became almost entirely deaf; and so found society irksome, and "began to withdraw himself into his own house. There, at his little table, while the calm sunset of his existence wore gradually away, he would sit reading and writing all day, with his white beard and locks of snow, never speaking to anyone but his wife. And in this manner he reached, on the nineteenth of January, 1578, that final moment which awaits us all." Not an unfit companion-picture, though a sad one, to that other in the "Meistersinger," where on a quiet Sabbath morning Hans Sachs sits at home, reading his German bible.

THE CHURCH ON THE STAGE.

Under the heading "Rubicund Romans and Pale-Faced Puseyites" a recent issue of the "Church Review" contained the following amusing article. The mere fact of its appearance in so prominent an organ is a sign of the times which will doubtless be appreciated by Mr. Stewart Headlam:—

"Will anyone inform a poor bewildered actor how to take the part of a priest on the stage? In the good old Protestant melodramas and novels they were always pictured either as fat, sensual, and lazy, or thin, pale, and studious-looking. The latter was invariably a 'wily Jesuit,' the former a monk of the friar of orders grey pattern. But as neither of these presentments would suit nowadays, except perhaps in Orange Liverpool or Protestant Islington, Mr. Thalberg, the actor, who plays the part of Father Michael in the new Adelphi drama of 'The English Rose,' has chosen another type. For this the theatrical critic of the "Telegraph" falls upon him tooth and nail.

'Mr. Thalberg,' says his irate (or is he Irish?) censor, 'has modelled his idea of the pale-faced priest on a Ritualistic curate, and not on any known form of the Irish ecclesiastic. He had strayed from St. Alban's, High Holborn, or the silent sanctuary of All Saints', Margaret-street, and not from Maynooth, and consequently these important scenes lacked vigour and virility. Picturesque the priest was always, whether as to coat, cassock, hat, or biretta, but if we may use such a phrase, he was lackadaisical.'

"This is unpardonable on Mr. Thalberg's part. He ought to have known that Ritualistic curates are not priests at all from the Roman point of view, and also that lackadaisicalness ('if we may use such a phrase') is their pre-eminent characteristic, especially in the aristocratic regions of Southwark, the London Docks, Baldwin's-gardens, and other fashionable localities in London and elsewhere. But his critic has not done with him yet. He proceeds to instruct him, and the world generally, as to what a priest who is not a Ritualistic curate really is. 'It is a mistake to suppose,' he says, from the serene heights of Ultramontanism, 'that taking orders in the Catholic religion necessitates an access of namby-pambyism. A priest—particularly an Irish priest—can be as plucky and manly as a soldier.' Mr. Thalberg should profit by this lesson. His mentor evidently knows how to play to the gallery a great deal better than he does himself. 'A priest—particularly an Irish priest—can be as plucky and manly as a soldier' is as sure to bring down the house nowadays as 'He who lays his hand on a woman, save in the way of kindness,' &c., was infallible in the days of our forefathers. The actor should have known that in the competition for pluckiness and manliness no English need apply, even if they are R.C.'s. 'Verts should take a note of this. Evidently the Rev. J. W. Adams, rector of Postwick, is excluded. This 'lackadaisical' curate, who is a priest-associate of the C. B. S., is the only army chaplain who ever won the Victoria Cross. He has, moreover, medals, clasps, and stars innumerable; but, of course, as he is an English priest, the V.C. doesn't stand for pluck. As to Lowder, Mackonochie, and a score others, they, being merely typical 'Ritualistic curates,' do not count at all, their battles in the slums notwithstanding. Finally, we discover what a priest—particularly an Irish priest—should be. 'The play would gain immensely if Father Michael could be a little less milk-and-watery; in fact, if he could mix a little good Irish whiskey with the water, and leave out the milk.' For the future, then, actors must remember that if they wish to impersonate a real priest they must surround him, not with the odour of sanctity, but with an odour of whiskey and water. Henceforward rubicundity ('if we may use such a phrase') of visage, not to say of nose, will be a distinguishing mark of valid priesthood. Reversing history, the genuine braves will be distinguished from the Ritualistic pale-faces by their fondness for fire-water. Even in Irish history the Father Mathew of fact will have to give place to the Father Malpas of fiction. Cardinal Manning may not particularly like this mixture of the spirituous with the spiritual, this amalgamation of toddy with theology, but then even he is only, as it were, a poor sophisticated article himself, with not a drop of the genuine 'crathur' in him. No wonder, then, that 'Ritualistic curates' are treated with such lofty disdain, for even if they 'vert they never become the right colour unless they hail from the Emerald Isle itself.'

NOTES AND NEWS.

Mr. Robert Buchanan is thoroughly enjoying himself again. Never was there a man who loved a fight so much as this beaming and affable gentleman; and when a fortnight ago Mr. John Coleman invited him to tread on the tail of his coat, who so happy as the Dramatist of the North? In a letter to the "Era" Mr. Coleman plainly said that the plot of the "English Rose" was taken—more or less bodily—from a French melodrama of which he (Mr. Coleman) had given Mr. Buchanan a translation years ago. Now, what said Mr. Buchanan? Did he print parallel passages to prove that his play was not a bit like the other man's, or did he give a detailed account of the two dramas, plot for plot, and show that they were as unlike—well, as Adelphi melodramas can be?

Not a bit of it. He soon dismissed that part of the case. "Likeness?" says he. "Oh—well—most plays are alike, but these aren't more alike than usual. If I took the plot from anywhere it was the 'Village Priest,' but now you just come on"—and he proceeds for the space of a column to prove that Mr. Coleman is no more like an English gentleman than the "English Rose" is like a play, or something of that kind. It was a good

smashing letter, but as it was all hitting and no guarding it left his opponent on opening for a reply, which we are delighted to see is promised by Mr. Coleman for this week's "Era." This is much better than enormous gooseberries; Mr Ledger, sir, we felicitate you.

Talking of Irish plays, there is an interesting article on the characters in them to be found in this month's "Gentleman's Magazine." It is written by one W. J. Lawrence, who is evidently a native of the Green Isle, and whose innocent hatred of the Saxon who dares to draw a wicked Irishman, and warm gratitude to the man who paints rosy pictures of the Celtic virtues, are things good to see. He traces the ancestry of the Shaughraun and his brethren from the wild Teagues of Ben Jonson's masque, through the rascally priest Foigart and the good-hearted, blundering Dennis Brulgruddery and Sir Lucius O' Trigger of the last century; and tells us pleasantly of the great Irish comedians of the past and their successor of to-day—Macklin, Jack Johnstone, Tyrone Power, and Boucicault.

The Queen's Theatre, Manchester, which was burnt last Sunday, had been of late years one of the most prosperous houses in the city—perhaps because it devoted itself chiefly to the melodrama of the strongest kind, and provincial taste has latterly set very strongly in this direction.

Messrs. Sims and Pettitt (and their musical collaborateur, Herr Meyer Lutz) have determined to give their new burlesque of "Carmen" a trial week at Liverpool before it is heard in London—and very right they are. Miss Florence St. John is to be the heroine, and the part ought to fit her as she has never been fitted before.

We regret sincerely to hear that Mr. W. S. Gilbert has been advised to take a year's holiday, so seriously is his health affected. It is pretty generally known that he has sold that charming house of his in Harrington-gardens, and intends henceforth to make Hertfordshire his headquarters.

The unlucky Novelty has failed again—not, we fear, less deservedly than before—and the "season at cheap prices" came to an inglorious end after seven nights. One need hardly add that the company did not receive their full salaries.

At last Mr. Daly has determined to try a new adapter for one of his German farces; and he has made an excellent choice—our atest humourist, Mr. J. K. Jerome.

Despite the rumours, we believe that Mr. Augustus Harris has not yet determined on what night the run of "A Million of Money" shall commence.

Mr. H. A. Jones's "Deacon" will make his bow—in the person of Mr. Willard—on the 27th instant at a Shaftesbury *matinée*. Mrs. Macklin (as the heroine) and Mr. Charles Fulton are included in the cast of the little play.

Our theatrical readers may be surprised to hear that a vigorous controversy has been going on of late—behind their backs, as it were—about the stage. Not the stage of to-day, we admit; yet that of so recent a period as a little over two thousand years ago. Discoveries at Epidaurus, at Oropus, at Athens, at the Piræus, at the theatre in the Valley of the Muses, have raised a question which learned men are now debating with some heat. Was the place of the actors on the level of the orchestra, with certain columns to be found in all the theatres just named as a back-ground, or on a stage supported by these columns, and widely separated from the chorus in the orchestra? But excavations now going on at Megalopolis have practically settled this question as regards the theatres of the fourth and fifth centuries: for here (says Mr. Ernest Gardner in a letter to the "Athenæum") we have a stage almost certainly contemporary with the building of the theatre. It consists of a back wall with three doors about 6ft. above the level of the orchestra, and a thick parallel wall in front, which formed the front of the stage, probably made, like the orchestra, of levelled and beaten earth. Probably the stage was about 5ft. above the level of the orchestra; and along its whole front and sides is a flight of steps descending to that level, thus affording easy communication between actors and chorus. The stage was 20ft. broad. Here we have, for the first time, a fourth-century stage, probably similar to those on which the great works of the Attic drama were first acted.

MUSIC IN AND OUT OF TOWN.

London no longer claims the attention of the musical world. The wave of harmony which during the last few weeks of the season threatened to overwhelm the most enthusiastic devotee has now receded from the disconsolate city, and the artistic dreams of the concert-room have given place to the more prosaic study of Bradshaw and the simpler pleasures of the country. Some months ago the artists of this world of song returned in full force. Towards the end of April the woods and glades were the scene of a grand practice, preparatory to the burst of choruses in May.

Nature was already alive to the fact that spring had come. The beeches put forth leaves of bright delicate green, and the oaks, to ensure a fine summer, made haste with their yellow-tinted foliage to be before the ash, and the elms arrayed themselves in dark green, and the grass grew long and rustled in the wind, and then the season could fairly be said to have begun. And the silence all around harmonised with the suggestive voices of nature.

London was busy, too. The "season" was commencing, and the musical world began, so to speak, to tune up. Fashionable audiences assembled to generalise or particularise, and the critics determined that for criticism's sake nobody should be let off too easily.

But in London, unfortunately, there is no sympathetic correspondence of environment. Let us suppose a few enthusiasts assembled at the shrine of art. The sympathies are quickened and the imagination fired—the world has become idealistic until foot is set once more in the crowded streets. There, like the rude awakening from a pleasant dream, the music within us vanishes before the realistic shouts of cabmen, the pushing for carriages, and the manifold tokens of aggressive humanity. And we say to ourselves that the world is prosaic, and music has very little place in it.

But in the country! The woods are alive with song. In the evening, the nightingales contribute a few short recitatives, waiting for night before giving forth their full song. Meanwhile the thrushes and blackbirds have it all their own way, the chaffinches swell the chorus, and there is a sympathetic rustle of subdued applause among the trees; but all around is that pervading silence—silence—as if to bring the harmony of sounds into stronger relief. There is nothing to break the spell after one of nature's entertainments.

Towards the beginning of June the songsters of wood and glen retire to private life, and occupy themselves with domestic concerns, all of which arrangements are carried on with that leisurely haste which characterises the country.

But the music of that world has not ceased; and the colours—ah, how beautiful! the primroses, cowslips, and violets, with their varied shades of yellow, orange, and deep blue, have vanished with the songs of the birds, but in their place throng the guests who are preparing to celebrate the advent of midsummer—the orchids in their fancy dress, representing bees, butterflies, frogs, flies, gnats, and the great daisies banding to and fro in the long grass.

And music? The air is full of it, if you care to listen. But it is one of nature's stringent rules that those who do not appreciate her melodies shall not hear them. In our towns and cities the unappreciative are bored by the very harmonies to which they are sometimes forced to listen; but the ceaseless murmur of the water falls only on listening ears, and the chatter of the birds as they make their nests is heard only by those who fix their attention. The soft notes of the wood pigeon, the shiver of the poplars, the rustle of the rushes by the river, the hum of the insects, and the beating of the waves upon the shore must be remembered by those who wish to hear.

Unassuming yet powerful agencies are nature's forces in moulding the characteristics and habits of men. Why, for instance, are the north country people who live amongst the fells and hills proverbially musical? Because the ears of those who listen have caught the cadence of the running streams and the fall of the burns as they rush in a wild crescendo over the boulders, or wend their way on summits cautiously, quietly to the river.

Or why are the Italians famous for their love of colour? Because the cloudless blue of their skies, and the Mediterranean's depth of colour, and the rich tints of the world of nature in which they live have stimulated their imagination, and the effect left upon the minds of those who constantly see these things is noticeable in their works of art.

August is here, and there is a rhythmic sound in the cutting of the corn which many a Londoner would hasten from St. James's Hall to hear. Snatches of song are heard from the fields, and the whistle of the boys at work about the farm, and underlying all the romance of a picturesque scene are the great principles of art's relation to use and nature's provision for the wants of man. September? October? But a veil shall be drawn before the winter scene opens. There is music then, but the minor key predominates, and there is another side, perhaps, to the question of enjoyment.

FOUR VOLUMES OF VERSE.

Mr. J. F. Rowbotham is a man not only of marked ability but also of remarkable ambition. His "History of Music" was a monumental work, a contribution to musical history of a value not easily calculable. Readers of "THE MUSICAL WORLD," moreover, have had ample proof of his erudition. His ambition was shown, scarcely with happy results, in the violent attack upon Wagner, which appeared not long ago in the "Fortnightly Review;" but the recollection of all that he had done so worthily before this escapade, and of what he has done since, may sufficiently atone, and it would be ungenerous indeed to recall in greater detail an incident less worthy of his name. A fresh illustration of his ambition is, however, afforded by the publication of the first canto of "The Human Epic,"* in which, as far as may be gathered, Mr. Rowbotham proposes to set forth the early history of the world, passing in review all the geological periods, telling of the first dawn of life, and ending with the development of man from the animal, and recounting all that may be imagined of his strange and romantic life in pre-historic ages. A great task, truly; and one well worthy of accomplishment. To tell of that wonderful childhood of the world, as it has now been revealed by modern science, one should speak the tongue that Milton spake, and possess the majesty of his imagination; and to achieve such a task as this were to entitle oneself to a lofty seat on Parnassus—nay, on Olympus. But the path to Parnassus is strait and steep, and few there be that find it. We are not, for the present, inclined to say whether Mr. Rowbotham has found it, or whether he has only strayed from the narrow way down that pleasant but delusive by-lane which, in the Poet's Progress, is named Good Intentions. A single canto of what is destined to be a lengthy epic is obviously insufficient as material for judging the whole. Moreover, the scope of this first section is larger and more vaguely defined than will be the scope of the succeeding portions of the work; for herein the author is chiefly occupied in tracing the evolution from nebulousness of the young world. In the treatment of this Mr. Rowbotham certainly displays some degree of imagination and power of fluent versification, although in attempting to compress into a hundred nine-line stanzas the whole enormous period occupied—as geologists say—in this slow process he may convey a somewhat false impression; for, had the reader no other data, he might imagine that Mr. Rowbotham conceived the crudescence of the globe to have occupied but a few hours. But in dealing with such gigantic themes occasionally weakness of handling is inevitable. Even Milton scarcely at times escapes the pitfalls of the ludicrous. So Mr. Rowbotham has precedent, and we shall not condemn him for such vagueness of thought and phrase as is contained in the following lines:—

"First, in the endless plains of ancient night,
Where height and depth, length, limits were erased,
A mist, self-luminous and silver-bright,
Lay like a lake along the gloomy waste.
One sheet of silent silver there was placed;
Beneath it, vacancy; above it, void;
Round it, eternity."

As has been said, it is given to few—nowadays at least—to combine the pomp and splendour of the Miltonic imagination with the scientific accuracy and width of a Huxley; yet is this combination needful to him who would tell in verse the story of the earth. It may be that Mr. Rowbotham has the necessary qualities; in which case he will succeed in his great task. At any rate, we shall read with interest the succeeding cantos of the "Human Epic;" and, taking leave of him for the present, shall quote, as

* "The Human Epic" (Canto I.). By J. F. ROWBOTHAM. [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, and Co., Limited.]

an index to the purpose of the poem, the initial stanzas of the present volume:—

"The ancient night of Chaos, hoar and wild,
The reign of gloom and murky anarchy,
Ere yet a trace of form or beauty smiled,
Ere elemental masses could agree,
But raged in fearful strife eternally:
How warring nature triumphed o'er her woes,
How discord foul gave place to harmony,
How drooping tumult fluttered to repose,
And from the depths of night the spangled world arose:

How on its bright and planetary round
Life softly stirred in germination strange,
How vital swarming atomies were found,
The first and breathing harbingers of change;
Then fishes flocked, the crystal seas to range;
Then trees enwrapped its universal girth;
How reptiles rose to rule the leafy grange;
How monsters vast then stumbled to the birth,
In shapes colossal stalking o'er the silent earth:

How, last and fairest offspring, man appeared,
And infant reason found at length a tongue:
His slow ascension from the brutish herd;
His toils, his arts by patient labour wrung;
How cares in clouds around his pathway clung;
How deluges, how storms were his distress;
How brutish foes retarded, hardships stung;
How still he strove, till joy and happiness,
The fit rewards of toil, his labours came to bless.

Thus sum I up with trembling lips my theme.
Thou mighty Spirit of the Universe,
Vouchsafe me to achieve this daring dream.
The clouds of error and of doubt disperse.
Be Thou my guide, while I my soul immerse
In ancient times, in hoar antiquity,
And, fetching thence long-lying lore, rehearse,
By Thy high aid and bounteous clemency,
A song, worthy the theme exalted, worthy Thee."

With his characteristic energy Mr. Ruskin has somewhere declared that the world has no need of minor poets because it has already so many great ones, that any verse short of the absolutely great is superfluous and irritating. Why the genial art-critic does not apply this to painters and musicians is hard to discover, unless (as is indeed justifiable and to the point) one urges that the speaker is Mr. Ruskin. Of course the ordinary minor—still worse, the minimus—poet is a wearisome fellow. He puts a "foreword" to his tiny volume (generally published in the summer, when the fierce critic is supposed to be at the seaside), in which he says that, in deference to the repeated requests of his aunts and cousins, he has consented reluctantly to publish the present volume; or he deprecatingly admits that the verses now put before the public have been the solace of his hours of pain, or of pleasure, as the case may be; and that it is in the hope of affording like solace to a few readers that he prints the following; and so on, for of the making of excuses there is no end when once your bardlet has made up his mind to publish. For this kind we do not profess any sympathy; they may be handed over to the buttermilk without compunction. But Mr. Gerard Bendall is of quite a different sort. A minor poet he certainly is, in the sense that he does not move on the high plane of the greatest poets. His is not the idyllic perfection of Tennyson, or the subtle thinking of Browning. But in his case "minor" is not a word of reproach. He has imagination, grace of fancy and phrase, distinction of style; and it is in the lack of these that the minor poet is contemptible. Mr. Bendall's new volume* is, therefore, by virtue of the plentiful exhibition of the desirable qualities indicated, neither superfluous nor irritating. On the contrary, we may welcome it heartily. The note struck is never very tragic, the spirit never very fiery. But Mr. Bendall has that most excellent virtue—knowledge of his own powers, which he is careful never to overstep. With very few exceptions the poems are delicate specimens of art, graceful and polished;

*Ivy and Passion-Flower. By GERARD BENDALL. [London: Heinemann.]

their humour is pretty, their pathos sincere and unforced. That the workmanship is fairly equal is indicated with sufficient clearness by the fact that we find but a single line which is absolutely objectionable. We quote it for Mr. Bendall's good. It is the third line in the following verse from a very graceful piece called "The Pilgrim":—

"One dainty shoe the hearthrug white
Embracing hides from view;
The left leg thrown across the right
Lifts high the other shoe."

This is plain prose—very plain, and should not have been written by the hand which could pen so unaffected but complete a piece as this:—

TOUT PASSE.

Can we exceed the mortal range,
Or slip the hands of fate? Alas!
All things must change, and we must change.
All things must pass, and we must pass.
Yet though we tread by other ways,
Though other lips and eyes are near,
Both now and for all future days,
It will be well that we were here.
It will be well that for a space
The world's whole worth seemed not one kiss,
That men were nought, but face to face
We two as gods in changeless bliss.
And calmer we shall face mischance
When to our minds these memories rise;
Like fallen angels in whose glance
Shines yet the dream of Paradise.

We are a humble entity, unversed in the ways of the great world; but we believe that it is incorrect, and contrary to the highest laws of society, to rush at a lady to whom you have not been introduced, and, shaking her hand violently, to say you are pleased to see her. Nevertheless, all these wildly indecorous things have we compassed in imagination with Miss Gertrude Hall, the author of the modestly named volume of verses* which has just been issued by Mr. Heinemann. The publisher must pronounce the mystic words. At any rate, we are very glad to see Miss Hall (pray Heaven she be Miss!) because no more interesting volume of verse has fallen into our hands for a long time. The lady poet is, if the truth must be told, a perplexing creature. She is so fragile, so pitiable, that even when at her worst—and that is very bad indeed—your most heartless reviewer is loth to stamp on her, or use her as a missile for the discomfiture of the organ-grinder, or do any of the things which he accomplishes toward the male minor poet. So he is sorely put to it to temper justice with mercy and gallantry—unless, of course, she chance to be Miss Rossetti, or Miss Mary Robinson, or Mrs. Meynell, when the difficulty is "contrariwise." Yet, when one thinks of it, one may wonder if the contemporary literature of any other country can show so graceful an array of women-singers. Where shall we look for rivals to the three we have named?—to whom ought to be added, as worthy companions, Mrs. Webster, Mrs. Wood, Michael Field (who indeed, say some, is not one woman, but two), and Mr. Lewis Morris. Verily a goodly feminine fellowship. And now to join them comes Miss Gertrude Hall. Perhaps this lady may have written other volumes; if so, we grieve at our ignorance thereof; for this book is so admirable that we shall gladly make acquaintance with all her work, past or future. That she is impeccable is not pretended by our enthusiasm; but, on her plane, she is an unmistakable artist. Careless, perhaps; or, at least, without that super-sensitiveness to imperfection in form which is the privilege and the proof of the most perfect workman. Awkward inversions frequently spoil an otherwise good line, and an occasional slovenliness in rhyme is equally plain; but these are faults which can scarcely hinder Miss Hall for long. In the matter of originality, too, there is something to be said. The reader is sometimes haunted with reminiscences, and in our own case the reminiscence has usually been of Miss Rossetti, less often of Miss Ingelow, and twice of Browning—notably in the little poem beginning "What does the poor wind want to-night?" which seems to owe its inspiration to a certain famous passage in "James Lee's Wife." But what of these? Miss Hall is presumably young, and has the faults of youth, and her merits are palpable enough. A very tender vein of melancholy ("No ship can now set sail without pathos," says Mr.

Meredith), which is never morbid; a something which is neither melancholy nor gay, and for which "fantasy" seems a better word than fancy; a delicate, sad sort of humour; a dramatic sense which may in time become dramatic strength—these are Miss Hall's good qualities on the emotional side. Technically, she has considerable ingenuity in the matter of verse-arrangement, considerable metrical skill, and a keen eye for colour. Miss Hall is a genuine poet; but she will be a much better one when, with greater experience, she has learned how to choose her material better, and when her hand has grown stronger and more cunning. For the present we have said enough, we hope, to make many seek her acquaintance. It is difficult to detach for quotation a single poem from a whole so cohesive in spirit and atmosphere, although not in narrative form. Let us, however, extract a tiny pair of verses, not by any means as showing the best of which Miss Hall is capable, but chiefly for our own pleasure. Their gossamer-like delicacy will give no hint of the strength apparent in "Nausicaa" or "The Queen's Lute-Player;" but, for all that, they shall be quoted:—

"Last night when stars their softest shone,
One came to me in dream and said:
'Forlorn thy days are, Loving One,
For I have long been dead.
'And I who lived so long ago,
My earthly days, too, were forlorn,
For thou whom I had cherished so
Hadst not yet then been born.'"

It will be news to many readers that there is in New Zealand a lady who writes poetry—her name, Mrs. James Glenny Wilson; her *nom de plume* "Austral." Yet such a fact need not surprise us, for virtue and vice are independent of geographical conditions, and there is no particular reason why poetry written in New Zealand should not be as good, or as bad, as poetry written in England. Mrs. Glenny Wilson's new volume* is neither as good as some, nor as bad as more, of our indigenous verse. Its title, "Themes and Variations," may excite the musician's curiosity; but, truth to tell, there is little to satisfy it. There are poems which bear the titles of "The Musician," "Franz Schubert"—a somewhat banal rhapsody, and a remarkable piece, "At Music," of which the following is the last verse:—

"The pomegranate tree listens and rustles above,
The nightingale warbles her nocturne of love;
'Tis the whisper of sleep, 'tis a balm for the heart,
'Tis a theme of Mozart!"

A nightingale that warbles themes by Mozart certainly deserves the note of exclamation which the author has affixed. It is fair to say, however, that she can do better things than this, as witness the following graceful, if not very original fancy:—

"Columbus, wandering by the Iberian shore,
Asked of the waves to aid him in his quest,
And if, beyond that tremulous silver floor,
They murmured round some kingdom of the west.
"The breakers washed, in answer, to the land
Fragments of spicy wood, strange fruit, and shell;
And once a graven toy for childish hand,
A riddle for the sailor's wish to spell.
"And we, who wander by the whispering bent,
In faith, and dream, and broken memory,
Seek for a sign of that far continent
That lies beyond Death's undiscovered sea."

†In publishing a complete edition of the poems written by the late William Leighton his relatives have done a wise thing. For, though a greater popularity is enjoyed by the writings of his relative, Robert Leighton, the author of "Records," these simple and sincere poems are scarcely less worthy of an appreciative audience. It is, of course, unnecessary to speak of the present volume at length, since nearly all of the poems contained in it have already seen the light; and it need only be remarked that their expressed earnestness of thought and love of all that is good in life entitle them to consideration. The volume is enriched by several clever illustrations by Mr. John Leighton, a son of Robert Leighton, which add materially to its value and interest.

* "Verses." By GERTRUDE HALL. [London: Wm. Heinemann.]

* "Themes and Variations." [London and Sydney: Griffith, Farran, Okeden, and Welsh.]

† "The Poems of William Leighton." [London: Elliot Stock.]

SIGNOR FOLI.

Allan James Foley—for it is no secret that this is the real name of the famous bass—was born at Cahir, Co. Tipperary. After a childhood spent in America he proceeded to Naples, where he studied singing under the elder Bisaccia, and in December, 1862, made his *début* at Catania in Rossini's "Otello." After many successful appearances at Turin, Modena, Milan, and Paris, he appeared at Her Majesty's Theatre on June 17, 1865, as St. Bris, and was heard later in "Die Zauberflöte" and "Der Freischütz." His operatic *répertoire* now includes more than sixty operas, the principal ones being the "Flying Dutchman" (Drury Lane, 1870) and "Robert le Diable." Signor Foli's first appearance in oratorio was made in 1866, at a performance of "Israel" by the National Choral Society. It is quite superfluous to comment upon the world-wide fame which Signor Foli has since enjoyed as the greatest *basso profundo* ever produced in the United Kingdom.

THE FEMALE COMPOSER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "MUSICAL WORLD."

SIR: It has already been stated that this nineteenth century is an age of unrest and hurry. It would seem also that it is equally an age of impatience.

With regard to that long-looked-for (though not so very long, for the higher education of music has not been open to women for so very many years) and much-debated musical phenomenon, the great female composer, why in such a hurry? Considering it takes centuries to make man what he is, how can you expect woman, who is universally understood to have less intellectual faculty than man, to come to the *very fore* in the arts and sciences before she has had time to develop her already handicapped intellect?

Remember, the past makes the future, or very much helps. Women were formerly kept back; now they are beginning to be brought forward or to being themselves forward.

That women have distinguished themselves in art and fiction is a now generally understood thing, but musical composition is with them at present in its childhood. They are doing very well. Who wishes to see a child of undoubted and promising talents develop abnormally and then subside into popular mediocrity? Such things do happen, and such would be the case if our female composer were so to develop, and equally abnormally, into a great composer. Why should we be impatient? Let us hope on, wait, she will come. And when she does come, after all this talk, shall we be prepared to meet her? Shall we give her the honour worthy to her name? or shall we ignore her as a thing incomprehensible until her death shall show us our mistake? Let us be with our eyes and ears open—our tongues are always upon the clatter—then if she *does* appear be to the fore to acknowledge her and help her on. (The writer does not mean to infer that women of talent go unrecognised in these advanced times, but that men of genius have been so dreadfully misunderstood and treated in their lifetime; so let us receive our woman of genius with open arms—when she comes.)

Women's ways are ever difficult of comprehension to men, and our phenomenon may come upon us when we least expect it. Unfailing patience and hope always bring their reward.

So let us hope, but be impatient never.

E. A. C.

FOREIGN NOTES.

A copy of the complete musical works of Frederick the Great, recently published by Messrs. Breitkopf and Härtel, has been presented to each of the principal conservatoires in Germany by the Emperor William.

A lamentable occurrence is reported from Constantinople, where Signor Sgarzi, director of the Sultan's music, and conductor of the Italian Opera, has been assassinated. Details of the crime are not yet available.

The Academy of the Royal Musical Institute at Florence has just paid a tribute to French music—and less directly to English music—by electing Miss Augusta Holmes a corresponding member.

It is proposed to organise a company in Paris for the construction, on the site of the old Opéra Comique, of an International Lyric Theatre. It will be built to hold 2,000 people, and is destined for the performance and popularization of operas without regard to their nationality. M. Epron, who is at the head of the undertaking, proposes next year to mount two French, two German, and two Italian works. Goldmark's "Queen of Sheba" and Wagner's "Meistersinger;" Verdi's "Otello" and Boito's "Mefistofele" are the works already chosen to represent German and Italian art. The French works are not yet chosen.

The opera which has been founded on M. Zola's exquisite novel, "Le Réve," by M. Bruneau, and which is to be mounted at the Eden Theatre, is divided into four acts and eight scenes, of which the titles are as follows. Those who have read the novel will appreciate the justice of the arrangement:—1. The house of the embroiderers. 2. The Washing. 3. Angelica's Mother. 4. The Religious Procession. 5. Angelica's Chamber. 6. The Cathedral. 7. The Administration of Extreme Unction. 8. The Apotheosis.

M. Massenet's new opera, "Le Mage," to which the composer is now putting the last touches at Vevey, is not likely to be heard at the Paris Opera after all. So, at least, says "Le Ménestrel," adding the explanation that MM. Ritt and Gailhard, the well-beloved directors, cannot find a contralto, since Mme. Renee Richard has accepted an engagement at the Eden. Why, asks our sarcastic *confrère*, do not the directors entrust the part to—a violin? That would be economical at any rate.

Pietro Mascagni's opera, "Cavalleria Rusticana," is to be mounted, we believe, at the Imperial Opera of Vienna, a German translation having been made for the purpose.

Teresina Tua's illness has, happily, been exaggerated and wrongly described. The young artist, who is at Rome with her husband, has but presented the world with twins! Let us hope they may develop into musicians as talented as their mother.

PROMENADE CONCERTS.

The "classical" portion of Wednesday evening's programme included Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and "Emperor" Concerto, the Overture to the "Flying Dutchman," and Grieg's "Peer Gynt" suite. The performance of the Symphony—with the important exception of the first movement—was extremely good, and singularly free from slips. It is, however, rather unreasonable to expect an adequate rendering of the opening Allegro at Covent Garden, when one so rarely hears one in St. James's Hall, except perhaps under the *bâton* of Herr Richter. Tameness was the principal defect in the performance of the "Flying Dutchman" Overture, and the final movement of the "Peer Gynt" suite, which should be exciting, became very much the reverse, chiefly through the mistaken *tempo* adopted by Mr. Crowe. Herr Friedheim's performance of the solo part of the E flat Concerto was technically remarkable, but lacking in warmth and ideality. Mr. Ben Davies sang "Waft her, Angels" from Handel's "Jephthah" in really admirable style, and Miss Colombati grappled very successfully with the difficulties of "Gli angui d'inferno."

Last Saturday's programme included very efficient performances of the Overture to "Oberon" and Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, both of which were listened to with marked appreciation by a very large audience; and a young violinist, Miss Marie Schumann, made her *début* at these concerts. She has considerable executive ability, but her appearance on the concert platform is somewhat premature.

PROVINCIAL.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

PORTSMOUTH.—In connection with the opening of the new Town Hall by the Prince of Wales on August 9th, a concert was given by the Philharmonic Society on August 11th, ably conducted by Mr. Pillow, and consisting of Haydn's "Creation" and a miscellaneous selection. On

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August 13th and 14th Dr. E. H. Turpin gave a series of four organ recitals, by way of opening the new grand organ. The programmes included organ works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Merkel, Lemmens, Smart, Best, Guilman, Rheinberger, Dudley Buck, &c. The recitals, like the concert, were attended by crowded audiences. The organ is of remarkably fine tone and admirable mechanism. The following is the specification:—Great Organ—Compass CC to C.—Double diapason, 16 feet; large open diapason, 8 feet; small open diapason, 16 feet; large open diapason, 8 feet; small open diapason, 8 feet; gamba, 8 feet; hohl flöte, 8 feet; harmonic flute, 4 feet; principal, 4 feet; twelfth, 3 feet; fifteenth, 2 feet; full mixture (four ranks); sharp mixture (three ranks); double trumpet, 16 feet; posaune, 8 feet; clarion, 4 feet. Swell Organ—Compass CC to C.—Bourdon, 16 feet; open diapason, 8 feet; stopped diapason, 8 feet; keraulophon, 8 feet; voix celestes to C, 8 feet; principal, 4 feet; suabe flute, 4 feet; flageolet, 2 feet; mixture (three ranks); contra fagotto, 16 feet; horn, 8 feet; oboe, 8 feet; clarion, 4 feet; vox humana, 8 feet; tremulant. Choir Organ—Compass CC to C.—Violin diapason, 8 feet; viol-di-gamba, 8 feet; salicional, 8 feet; lieblich gedact, 8 feet; gemshorn, 4 feet; wald flute, 4 feet; piccolo, 2 feet; corno-di-bassetto, 8 feet. Solo Organ—Compass CC to C.—Concert flute, harmonic, 8 feet; flauto traverso, 4 feet; flauto

traverso, 2 feet; orchestral oboe, 8 feet; tuba, 8 feet; tuba clarion, 4 feet; carillons (to be added). Pedal Organ—Compass CCC to F.—Double open diapason, 32 feet; open diapason, 16 feet; dulciana bass, 16 feet; bourdon, 16 feet; violoncello, 8 feet; principal, 8 feet; fifteenth, 4 feet; trombone, 16 feet; clarion, 8 feet. Couplers.—Swell to great, swell to choir, swell to pedal, swell octave on its own keys, solo to great super octave, solo to great sub-octave, solo to great, solo to pedal, great to pedal right hand, great to pedal left hand, choir to pedal. Accessories.—Four composition pedals to the great to act also on pedal organ, four composition pedals to the swell, three composition pedals to the choir, one pedal to take great to pedal on and off, draw stops of solid ivory drawing at an angle of 45 degrees, pneumatic lever to the great organ and couplers, pneumatic lever to the swell organ and couplers, pneumatic lever to the solo organ, the pedal organ on the tubular pneumatic principle, tubular pneumatic draw stop action, builder's patent automatic swell pedal, blown by a gas engine, placed in the basement of the hall. The stately new Hall, with its fine suite of rooms, large and effective organ, will be a great boon to Portsmouth, and great praise is due to the Mayor (Sir W. King), George Ellis, Esq., J.P., and other gentlemen who have taken an active and energetic interest in securing so great and useful an addition to the town.

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